

Message Text

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USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 5726

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT VE

SUBJECT: CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF INSURGENCY IN VENEZUELA

JUNE 1978

REFS: (A) CARACAS DAO IR 6 9020320 78;

(B) CARACAS DAO IR 6 902 0216 78,

(C) CARACAS 4164,

(D) CARACAS 3914

SUMMARY: DURING LAST TWO MONTHS, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SMALL-SCALE INCIDENTS BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND GUERRILLAS IN EASTERN VENEZUELA. WHILE THE INSURGENTS HAVE NOT BEEN CRUSHED, THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY DOES NOT PORTEND ANY MAJOR INSURGENCY EFFORTS, EITHER THERE OR IN THE CITIES, ALTHOUGH SPORADIC ATTACKS AGAINST SECURITY UNITS AND TEMPORARY SEIZURES OF SMALL HAMLETS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE IN THE EASTERN STATES. IN PART REFLECTING THE LOW LEVEL OF ACTIVITY, INSURGENCY HAS ALL BUT VANISHED AS AN ISSUE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

1. OCCASIONAL ENCOUNTERS CONTINUE

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ON APRIL 29, ONE SOLDIER WAS KILLED AND AN OFFICER WOUNDED WHEN THEIR VEHICLE WAS AMBUSHED BY SOME 15 INSURGENTS FIRING MACHINE GUNS NEAR EL SAMAN IN ANZOATEGUI STATE. THE DAY BEFORE, THE SAME INSURGENTS SEIZED A SMALL VILLAGE NEARBY AND HARANGUED THE INHABITANTS, EXHORTING THEM NOT TO VOTE IN DECEMBER. ON APRIL 30, A SOLDIER WAS RUN OVER AND KILLED AT A CHECKPOINT IN MONAGAS STATE WHEN A CAR

ATTEMPTED TO BYPASS THE CHECKPOINT (REF C). TWO DAYS LATER THE PRESS REPORTED THAT ARMY UNITS FOUND A CAMP PRESUMED INSURGENTS MAY HAVE USED SOME KILOMETERS AWAY. INTERIOR MINISTER LEPAGE CONFIRMED THAT THESE ATTACKS HAD OCCURRED, AND NOTED THAT THE INSURGENTS STRIKE SPORADICALLY AND BY SURPRISE. MAY 20 FOUR SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED IN AN INSURGENT AMBUSH NEAR SAN JOSE DE GUARIBE ON THE GUARICO-ANZOATEGUI BORDER. ON MAY 24, PRESUMED GUERRILLAS HAD A BRIEF FIREFIGHT WITH SECURITY UNITS AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE A TRUCK CARRYING FOOD NEAR ANAUCO, ANZOATEGUI. NONE WERE CAPTURED. A WEEK LATER, ON MAY 30, A GROUP OF DISIP (INTERIOR MINISTRY POLICE OFFICIALS) IN SOUTHERN ANZOATEGUI WERE FIRED AT BY THREE MEN IN A PASSING CAR. TWO BYSTANDERS WERE WOUNDED. ON JUNE 7 FOUR PRESUMED GUERRILLAS WERE CAPTURED NEAR SAN JOSE DE GUARIBE AND THE PRESS SPECULATED THAT THE DETAINEES MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE MAY 20 AMBUSH IN THE VICINITY. THE FIRST WEEK IN JUNE, THE PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT THE ARMY HAD FOUND GUERRILLA HIDEOUTS IN ANZOATEGUI (2) AND MONAGAS (12). THE HIDEOUTS WERE VARIOUSLY PROVISIONED WITH CANNED FOOD, ARMS, AND AMMUNITION. THERE WAS NO INDICATION WHETHER THEY HAD BEEN OCCUPIED RECENTLY. IN THE CITIES, THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISTURBANCES SINCE FEBRUARY (REF D), BUT AN FALN PAMPHLET HAS APPEARED (REF A) WITH INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE VARIOUS TYPES OF ANTI-PERSONNEL WEAPONS. THE PAMPHLET APPEARS TO COME FROM OUTSIDE VENEZUELA AND MANY OF THE INTERNAL REFERENCES

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ARE DATED. FURTHERMORE, THERE HAVE BEEN NO INSURGENCY ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF EASTERN VENEZUELA IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS.

2. INSURGENCY NOT A POLITICAL ISSUE

ALTHOUGH LAST YEAR COPEI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS DECLARED THAT VENEZUELA WAS ENTERING A STAGE OF "PRE-TERRORISM," HE HAS NOT MENTIONED THE INSURGENCY ISSUE SINCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGAN OFFICIALLY IN APRIL. NEITHER HAS THE AD CANDIDATE LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ. EVEN THE SENSATIONALIST PRESS HAS EASED OFF ON ITS LURID AND OFTEN EXAGGERATED COVERAGE OF INCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT BE ASCRIBED TO INSURGENTS. REFLECTING BOTH THE LOW LEVEL OF INSURGENT ACTIVITY AND THE THREAT THAT IT REPRESENTS AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT URBAN CRIME IS PERCEIVED AS A MUCH MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM, HERRERA CAMPINS HAS SHIFTED HIS FOCUS TO THE PROBLEM OF THE LACK OF PHYSICAL SECURITY FOR THE URBAN POPULATION POSED BY THE COMMON CRIMINALS. A MAJOR SHOOTOUT WITH THE SECURITY FORCES, OR OTHER DRAMATIC EVENTS SPONSORED BY THE INSURGENTS WOULD, OF COURSE, CHANGE THE SITUATION QUICKLY, BUT THE THREAT OF THE INSURGENTS IN THE EASTERN STATES, WHILE A CHRONIC PROBLEM FOR THE

LOCAL INHABITANTS AND THE AUTHORITIES, SIMPLY DOES NOT MERIT
NATIONAL ATTENTION AT THIS TIME.
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